

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

UNITED STATES AND WORLD CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12

TEACHER: LESSON 5

THEME: WHAT ABOUT OTHER NATIONS? HOW DOES THE UNITED STATES MEASURE UP TO THE WORLD?

ACTIVITY: ONE

This lesson will involve students in research, comparing the voting laws and election systems of a variety of nations. The students will be asked to teach other students what they learn using various methods. It is preferred that students have access to computers for these activities.

Remind students that Australia legally compels citizens to vote in national elections. Also, tell them that at least five other nations do the same. Assign them to find as many more as they can on their own. Be sure that students record and acknowledge the sources used. Give an extra reward to those who find at least five.

ANSWERS: Belgium, Luxembourg, Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica and Ecuador.

Note: You could give the students a hint by providing the first letters of these nations.

ACTIVITY: TWO

Decide in advance if you want to allow some students to do the same nation; it is suggested that you do NOT do this for this assignment, except for accommodation purposes.

Assign an area, region or continent of the world to each student. Task each student to research the voting laws of a nation in that assigned area. You might wish to exclude some of the nations mentioned in Student Lesson Four. You should be sure that someone is assigned to research our neighboring countries, Mexico and Canada.

One suggestion is to begin by looking at the Internet website of that nation's embassy in the United States. The answers may be there, or they can email the embassy with their questions. Another suggestion is to start at the United Nations website at www.un.org.

They should inquire about qualifications and restrictions on voting, for example:

1. Who is eligible to vote, and in what elections?
2. Is there a penalty for not voting?
3. Are there restrictions based on race, color, religion, gender, literacy, ability to pay a fee, ancestry, past political affiliation, duration of citizenship, property ownership, geographic location, or past criminal convictions?

Have the students look for comparisons or contrasts to what was learned in Lesson 4. Look for unique features of other systems, recent changes, or news related to voting rights and practices. Be sure that students record and acknowledge the sources used.

Sharing their discoveries/students as teachers:

Have each student convey his or her findings in an essay report of one page OR on a poster or other medium in non-essay form. Include as part of the report a commentary (or observation points) in which the student evaluates what was learned, drawing some conclusions about what level of voting democracy seems to be available in that nation in comparison with the United States.

Invite students to present their findings and conclusions to the class.